



**NEWS RELEASE** OC 48-10

Contact: Philip R. Carrizosa, 415-865-8044

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 29, 2010

## **Potential Sites Selected for El Centro Courthouse**

SAN FRANCISCO—Two potential sites are currently being considered for a new family courthouse in El Centro in Imperial County, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) announced today. Both sites are privately owned and in the same general area, near Wake Avenue, between South Clark Road and South Fourth Street, in an area midway between the county courthouse and the juvenile hall: the Duggins site, which fronts on Wake Avenue, and the Thomas Lane site, which fronts on Thomas Lane.

The two potential sites came out of an extensive site selection process that began more than a year ago and was conducted by the AOC, which manages the project, and the Superior Court of Imperial County, beginning more than a year ago. Following the Judicial Council's standard site selection policy, the AOC worked with the court to customize a set of objective criteria that will be used to evaluate potential sites. These criteria were then validated by the project advisory group, which represents the community and provides advisory input to the AOC and the court.

The AOC and the court had previously considered a site adjacent to the juvenile hall on land owned by the Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE). However, that site lacked the necessary utility infrastructure (grading, storm drainage, sewer, fire hydrants, power, street improvements, traffic lights, landscaping, etc.). After investigating the cost of extending infrastructure to the site and lengthy discussions with the ICOE and Imperial County, the AOC and the court have decided to pursue other potential sites endorsed by the project advisory group to prevent further delays in the project schedule and risks to the project budget.

The two short-listed sites, both of which have infrastructure already in place, have been scored and ranked against the criteria in order to make the selection process as objective and thorough as possible. The AOC will now conduct further due diligence on the short-listed sites. It is important to note that the site selection process is still in its early stages, and it is possible that current sites under consideration may not work out for any of a variety of reasons. Should that occur, the project team may revisit other potential sites considered earlier in the process or entirely new sites.

Once a preferred site and one or more alternate sites are selected and approved by State Public Works Board, the project team will conduct an environmental assessment under the California Environmental Quality Act before acquiring a site. Site selection and acquisition typically take between one and two years depending on the complexity of the required environmental assessments.

(more)

The proposed project will house four courtrooms in approximately 53,980 square feet. It will consolidate all family and juvenile court functions in a single facility and free space in the existing Imperial County Courthouse for criminal and civil proceedings. The existing juvenile courthouse has only one courtroom for delinquency and dependency cases and is overcrowded, and its security is among the worst in the state.

The new courthouse project, with an estimated total cost of \$58.7 million, was ranked as an “Immediate Need” in the judicial branch’s capital-outlay plan and is among the judicial branch’s highest-priority infrastructure projects. It is among the 41 projects to be funded by Senate Bill 1407, which finances critically needed courthouse construction, renovation, and repair through a portion of judicial branch fees, fines, and penalties.

More information about the project is at

[www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects\\_imperialelcentro.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_imperialelcentro.htm).

The Judicial Council’s *Site Selection and Acquisition Policy for Judicial Branch Facilities* is at

[www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/documents/site\\_selection\\_acquisition\\_policy.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/documents/site_selection_acquisition_policy.pdf).

# # #

*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*